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3-M

FROM: Brussels

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 976, December 16, 3 p.m.

During course of two-hour conversation with Max Buset, President Belgian Socialists, he said that statements made by party leaders at recent 73rd Party Congress and in Belgian Chamber of Representatives to effect that negotiations and conversations with Soviet Union by Western powers should be tried whenever possible should not be interpreted at their face value. In his opinion West should deal with Soviet Union as obliquely as latter deals with West. His party, he asserted, is not opposed to large effort toward military preparation but wants that preparation to be effective. We, he said, should remember that Belgian traditional concept of warfare is quite different from ours. Belgians are used to being overrun and are unable to think in terms of lengthy warfare with enemy being held outside country. British and American concepts in his opinion are quite different. In last war Belgian resistance was overcome in 18 days. Therefore, it is hard for average Belgian to understand how an important military production apparatus would be justified. Statements by representative party members to effect that conversations with Soviet Union should never be neglected, however, should not be interpreted as meaning that Belgian Socialists are opposed to active military preparation.

They do remain unconvinced that period of 24 months military service is called for at this time. I told Buset that our technicians were convinced that 24 month service is required and that we would be glad to provide him with additional data which may convince his party membership of this necessity.

He made familiar claim that PSC leadership provides little or no opportunity to develop a bipartisan foreign policy. He admitted that under circumstances Belgium should have bipartisan policy.

He said that his party, notwithstanding emotional and sentimental reasons, understands need for accepting West German rearmament. He is inclined to go along with any reasonable formula in which great powers would agree.

Regarding Spain

(over)

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-2-#976, December 16, 3 p.m., from Brussels.

Regarding Spain he deplores decision to send Ambassadors and declared that many Belgians like himself, who participated in Spanish Civil War, remain unalterably opposed to friendly relations with Franco Government.

MURPHY

GEM:MMG